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THE EARLE OF SUNDERLANDS

Letter to a Freind.

Robt Spencer

TO comply with what you desire, I will explaine some things, which wee talked of before, I left England. I have been in a station of great noise, without power or advantage whilst I was in it and to my ruine now I am out of it. I know I cannot justify my selfe, by saying, though it is true that I thought to have prevented much mischeife, for when first I found, I could not, I ought to have quitted the service, neither is it an excuse that I have Got none of those things, which usually ingage men in publicke affaires, my quality is the same it ever was, and my estate much worse, even ruin'd, though I was born to a very considerable one, which I am ashamed to have spoild, though not so much as if I had increased it by indirect meanes. But to go on to what you expect, the pretence to a dispencing power, being not onely the first thing which was much disliked since the death of the Late King, but the foundation of all the rest, I ought to begin with that, which I had so little to doe with, that I never heard it spoken of till the, time of Monmouths rebellion, that the King told some of the Counsell, of which I was one, that hee was resolv'd to give imployments to R. Catholl. it being fit, that all men should serve, who could be usefull, and on whome, hee might depend, I think every body advised him against it but with little effect as was soon seen that party was so pleased with what the King had done, that they perswaded him to mention it in his speech, at the next meeting of the Parlament, which hee did, after many debates whether it was proper or not, in all which I opposed it as is Knowne to very considerable persons, some of which, were of another opinion, for I thought, it would engage the King too farre, and it did give such offence to the Parlament, that it was thought necessary to prorogue it, after which, the King fell immediately, to the supporting the dispencing power, the most Chimericall thing that was ever thought of and must be so till the Governement here is as absolute as in Turkey, all power being included in that one, this is the sence I ever had of it, and when I heard Laweyers defend it, I never changed my opinion or language, how ever it went on, most of the Judges being for it, and was the cheife businesse of the State, till it was Looked on as settled. Then the Ecclesiasticall court was set up, in which there being so many considerable men of severall Kinds, I could have but a small part and that after Lawyers had told the King it was Legall, and nothing like the High Commission court, I can most truely say, and it is well knowne, that for a good while I defended Magdalen Col-

Colledge purely by care and industry, and have hundreds of times begg'd of the King, never to grand Mandamusses, or to change any thing in the regular course of Ecclesiasticall affaires, which hee of ten thought reasonable and then by perpetuall importunitis, was prevailed upon, against his owne sence, which was the very case of Magdalen Colledge, as of some others.

These things which I endeavourd though without successe, drew upon mee, the anger and ill will of many about the King. The next thing to be tryd was, to take off the penall Laws and the Tests, so many haveing promised their concurence towards it, that His Majesty thought it feasable but hee soon found it was not to be done by that Parlament, which made all the Catholl. desire it might bee dissolv'd, which I was so much against, that they Complained of mee to the King, as a man who ruin'd all his designes, by opposing the onely thing could carry them on, Liberty of Conscience being the foundation on which, hee was to build, that it was first offer'd at by the Lord Clifford, who by it had done the worke, even in the Late Kings time if it had not been for his weakenesse and the weakenesse of his Ministers: Yet, I hinder'd the dissolution severall weeks, by telling the King, that the Parlament in beeing would doe every thing hee could desire, but the takeing off, the penall Laws and the Tests, or the allowing his dispencing power and that any other Parlament though such a one could bee had, as was proposed, would probably never repeale those Laws, and if they did, they would certainly never doe any thing for the support of the Government, what ever exigency it might bee in. Att that time the King of Spaine was sick, upon which I said of ten to the King, that if hee should dye, it would bee impossible for his Majesty to preserve the peace of Christendome, that a warre must bee expected, and such a one, as would Cheifely concerne England, that if the present Parlament continued, hee might bee sure of all the help and service hee could wish, but in case hee dissolved it, hee must give over all thoughts, of forreigne affaires, for noe other ever would assist him, but on such tearmes, as would ruine the Monarchy, so that from abroad, or att home, hee would bestroy'd if the Parlament were broken, and any accident should happen, of which, there were many, to make the aid, of his people necessary to him. This and much more, I said to him severall times, privattly and in the hearing of others. But beeing overpower'd, the Parlament was broke, the Closetting went on, and a new one was to bee chosen, who was to gett by Closetting, I need not say, but it was certainely not I, nor any of my Freinds, many of them suffer'd, who I would faine have sav'd, and yet I must confesse with grief, that when the King was resolved, and there was no remedy, I did not quitt, as I ought to have done but served on in order to the Calling another Parlament. In the midst of all the preparations for it, and whilst the Corporations were regulating, the King thought fit, to order his Declarations to bee read in all Churches, of which I most Solemnly protest, I never heard one word, till the King directed it in Councell, that drew on the petition of Mylord Archbishop of Cant. and the other Lords the Bishops, and their prosecution, which I was so openly against, that by arguing continually, to show the injustice and the imprudence of it, I brought the fury of the R. Cathollikes upon mee to such a degree, and so unanimously, that I was just sinking, and I wish I had then sunke, but whatever I did foolishly to preserve my life. I continued still, to bee the object of their hatred, and I resolved to serve the Publicke, as well as I could, which I am sure, most of the Considerable Protestants then att Court, can testify, and so can one very Eminent man of this Country, who I would have

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perſwaded, to come into buſineſſe which hee might have done, to have helped mee, to reſiſt the violence of thoſe in power, but hee diſpaired of beeing able to doe any good, and therefore would not engage, ſome time after came the firſt news of the Princes deſignes, which were not then Looked on, as they have prooved, nobody foreſeeing the Miracles hee has done by his wonderfull prudence, Conduct, and courage, for the greateſt thing which has been undertaken theſe thouſand years, or perhaps ever, could not bee effected, without vertues hardly to bee imagined till ſeen neerer hand upon the firſt thought of his comeing, I Layd hold of the opportunity, to preſſe the King to doe ſeverall things which I would have had done ſooner, the Chief of which, were, to reſtore Magdalen Colledge and all other Eccleſiaſticall preferrements, which had been diverted, from what they were intended for, to take off Mylord Biſhop of Londons ſuſpenſion, to put the Countys into the ſame hands they were in ſome time before to anull the Eccleſiaſticall court and to reſtore intirely all the Corporations of England, theſe things were done Effectually, by the helpe of ſome about the King, and it was then thought I had deſtroyed my ſelfe by inraging again the whole R. Catholl. party to ſuch a height as had not been ſeen, they diſperſed Libells of mee every day, told the King that I betrayed him, that I ruined him by perſwading him to make ſuch ſhamefull condeſcentions, but moſt of all by hindring the ſecureing, the Cheife of the disaffected Nobility and Gentry which was propoſed as a certaine way to breake all the Princes meaſures and by adviſeing his Majeſty to call a free Parlament, and to depend upon that, rather than upon forreigne aſiſtance, it is true I did give him thoſe counſells which were called weake, to the laſt moment hee ſuffer'd mee in his ſervice, then I was accuſed of holding correſpondence with the Prince and was every where ſaid amongſt them, that no better could bee expected from a man ſo related as I was to the Bedford and Leyceſter families, and ſo allyed to D. Hamilton and the M. of Hallifax, after this accuſations of High threaſon were brought againſt mee which with ſome other reaſons relating to aſſaires abroad, drew the Kings diſpleaſure upon mee, ſo as to turn mee out of all without any conſideration and yett I thought I eſcaped well, expecting nothing Leſſe then the Loſſe of my head, as my Lord Middleton can tell, and I beleive none about the Court thought otherwiſe, nor had it been otherwiſe, if my disgrace had been deferred a day longer, all things being prepared for it, I was put out the 27. of Octobre. The R. Catholl. having been two months working the King up to it, without intermiſſion, beſides the ſeverall attacques they had made upon mee before, and the unuſuall aſſiſtance they obtained to doe what they thought ſo neceſſary, for the carrying on their affaires, of which they never had greater hope then att that time as may bee remembard by any who were then at London. But you deſired I would ſay ſomething to you of Ireland, which I will doe in very few words, but exactly true. My Lord Tyrconnell has been ſo abſolute there, that I never had the credit to make an Enſigne, or to keepe one in, nor to preſerve ſome of my freinds for whom I was much concern'd from the laſt oppreſſion and injuſtice, though I endeavour'd it to the utmoſt of my power, but yet with care and diligence, being upon the place, and hee abſent. I diverted the calling a Parlament there, which was deſign'd, to alter the acts of ſettlement. Ch. Juſtice Nugent and Baron Rice were ſent over with a draught of an Act for that purpoſe furniſhed with all the preſſing arguments could bee thought on to perſwade the King, and I was offer'd forty thouſand pounds for my concurrence, which I told to the King, and ſhew'd him att the ſame time the injuſtice of what was propoſed to him and the prejudice it would bee to that Countrey

trey, with ſo good ſucceſe, that hee reſolved not to think of it that year, and perhaps never, this I was helped in by ſome freinds, particularly my Lord Godolphin, who knows it to bee true and ſo doe the Judges before named and ſeverall others. I cannot omitt ſaying ſomething of France, there having been ſo much talke of a League between the two Kings. I doe proteſt that I never knew of any, and it there was ſuch a thing, it was carryed on, by other ſort of men laſt ſummer indeed French ſhipps were offer'd, to joyne with our fleet, and they were refuſed, ſince the Noiſe of the Princes deſigne, more ſhipps were offer'd and it was agreed how they ſhould bee commanded if ever deſired. I oppoſed to death the accepting of them, as well as any aſiſtance of men, and can ſay moſt truely, that I was the principall meanes of hindring both, by the help of ſome Lords with whom I conſulted every day, and they with mee to prevent what wee thought, would bee of great prejudice if not ruinous to the Nation. If the report is true, of men ſhipps and mony, intended Lately for England out of France it was agreed upon ſince I was out of buſineſſe, or without my knowledge. If it had been otherwiſe, I beleive no body thinks my Disgrace would have happen'd, my Greateſt Misfortune has been, to bee thought the promoter of things I oppoſed and deteſted, whilſt ſome I could name have been the inventors, and contrivers, of what they have had the art to Lay upon Others, and I was often fooliſtily willing to beare, what my Maſter would have done, though I uſed all poſſible endeavours againſt it. I ly under many other Misfortunes and afflictions extream heavy. But I hope, they have brought mee to reflect, on the occaſion of them, the looſe negligent unthinking life I have hitherto lead, having been perpetually hurryed away from all good thoughts by pleaſure Idleneſſe the Vanities of the Court, or by buſineſſe. I hope I ſay, that I ſhall overcome all the disorders, myformer Life had brought upon mee, and that I ſhall ſpend the remaineing part of it, in begging of Almighty God that hee will pleaſe either to put an end to my ſufferings, or to give mee ſtrength, to beare them, one of which hee will certainely grant, to ſuch as rely on him, which I hope I doe, with the ſubmiſſion, that becomes a good Chriſtian. I would inlarge on this ſubject, but that I feare you might thinke ſomething elſe to bee the reaſon of it, beſides a true ſence of my faults, and that obliges mee to reſtraine my ſelfe at preſent. I beleive you will repent the having ingaged mee in giveing you this account, but I cannott, the doeing what you deſire of mee.

January the 29. 168$\frac{8}{9}$.

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